UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1991/8/Add.1/Rev.1
12 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The comments of the Secretary-General to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP)" (E/1991/8) are being transmitted to the governing bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme.

A. General comments

1. While the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) is introduced as "brief, informational and analytic", the importance of the Statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) as the basis for all recommendations concerning it could bear repeating. Adopted in 1979, the present Statute is an outcome of prolonged consultations among the main partners - the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the African Governments. While it removed the ambiguities contained in the original Statute of 1963, it also (in article III) spelled out clearly the linkage between IDEP, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and, by extension, the United Nations itself. This explains the close interest which the ECA Conference of Ministers has always shown in the future of the Institute (as, for example, in resolution 612 (XXII) of 1987), the high level of support provided by ECA to the Institute over the years, and the recommendations put forward in the present report, to incorporate the key posts of the Institute into the United Nations regular budget.

B. Comments on the recommendations

2. Recommendation 1 (a). The Secretary-General has some reservations with regard to the suggestion that assessments should be reduced to a scale that would be within the capacity of all members to pay. The commitment on the part of Member States, as reflected in the Statute of the Institute, would be

diluted by such an arrangement. The Secretary-General is fully aware that deterioration in the economic situation of African countries has dramatically reduced hopes for full payments of assessed contributions; however, the situation has improved in the recent past. A realistic alternative to the proposed reduction in assessments would be to link such reduction with the increased use of and payment for the advisory and consultancy services provided by IDEP to the Member States.

3. Recommendation 1 (b). The Secretary-General agrees with the mechanism of making payments to IDEP by direct transfer from Member States' central banks. However, monthly transfers have proved difficult to administer and a system of annual payment is recommended.

4. Recommendation 2. The Secretary-General is of the view that the issue of the incorporation of the permanent posts of IDEP into the regular budget of the United Nations should be considered, bearing in mind the existing practices of assistance by the United Nations to the autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions established within the United Nations system and in the light of provisions of section V of General Assembly resolution 45/248 A. The following measures have already been taken to secure continuation in IDEP of its core posts:

(a) Since 1989, ECA has assigned two posts (those of the Director, and the Chief of Administration and Finance) to IDEP from its own budget;

(b) A subvention in the amount of $392,000 for the year 1991 from the regular budget of the United Nations was approved by the Assembly at its forty-fifth session. Another subvention to IDEP in the amount of $850,000 from the regular budget has been included under section 23 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. That proposal will be reviewed by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

(c) Missions to member countries in recent months have resulted in some reduction in the balance due to the Institute as at 31 December 1990;

(d) Rationalization of the IDEP support staff has resulted in the reduction of 11 posts since 1987.

5. Recommendation 3 (a). As the report notes, steps to absorb five general service posts within the host Government are under way, and are being pursued by the Institute.

6. Recommendation 3 (b). The Secretary-General does not agree with the recommendation that the number of translators and interpreters be reduced to one, and that freelance personnel should be used as the need arises. Efforts are being made to rationalize the work of interpreters and translators by combining their functions, with the target number of posts envisaged being three.

7. Recommendation 4. Meetings of the Governing Council of IDEP have been reduced from two per year to one, which is now held in conjunction with the ECA Conference of Ministers.

8. Recommendation 5. The Secretary-General shares the earlier views expressed by the JIU on the possibility of using country indicative planning figures (IPFs) for the payment of assessed contributions, it being understood that the use of each country's IPF should be settled trilaterally between the Government, IDEP and the UNDP resident representative in the country concerned. This possibility has been retained in recommendation 5, but only with regard to payment of arrears. Such a mechanism would have the twin purpose of closely associating the regional institution with country programming exercises, while also enabling it to effectively deliver its services to the countries.

9. Recommendation 6. The Secretary-General agrees that the establishment of an IDEP advisory and consultancy service is compatible with the IDEP Statute, and that there is an increasing demand for this form of support. Attempts have been made by ECA to take measures in that regard.